

1. Role of Science Advisors

The Planning Agreement and the Statement of Principles call for inclusion of independent scientific input and analysis to assist in the preparation of the BDCP so that the best available answers to management questions, including measurable objectives, are used to develop and implement the BDCP and the associated monitoring program. For that purpose, independent scientists representing a broad range of disciplines, including conservation biology and locally-relevant ecological knowledge, will be identified and asked to address a series of questions.

The independent scientists may also be asked to provide additional feedback on key issues during preparation of the BDCP, and may prepare reports regarding specific scientific issues throughout the process, as deemed necessary by the Parties.

2. Facilitation of the Science Advisors

DFG, in their guidance on development of an independent science advisory process, strongly recommends that the science process include a neutral intermediary who coordinates the meetings and materials, assists in explaining the charge and questions to the scientists, solves unexpected logistical problems, and acts as the point of contact between the scientists and the Parties. The facilitator would be independent from the consultants and Parties.

DFG recommends the following characteristics and skills in a facilitator:

- Substantially neutral with respect to the group the person is facilitating (i.e., the independent science advisors) and acceptable to Parties
- Has no decision-making authority and no stake in the outcome of the scientific report
- Supports the science advisory process and the scientists' product; will make sure logistical details are carried out and that the process keeps to its timeline
- Understands the scientists' needs and perspectives
- Understands the regulatory framework
- Knows how to guide a group of people through cooperative processes
- Good at accurate listening and observing
- Ability to communicate clearly, and help group members communicate among themselves
- Good at analyzing and synthesizing issues
- Infinite patience

Assignment: Identify a facilitator

3. Selection of Science Advisors

Based on how other plans have selected advisors, some possible criteria for selection of science advisors could include expertise in:

- The ecology or population biology of one or more key covered species in the HCP / NCCP,
- Moderate to large-scale ecological patterns and processes,
- Conservation biology and its application to development of a conservation strategy for an estuarine system,
- Water supply and water quality planning, and
- Adaptive management.

More general criteria could also include:

- Scientific credibility,
- No previous affiliation with the HCP / NCCP consultant
- Independence from the BDCP Parties
- Excellent oral and written communication skills, and
- Strong interpersonal skills, including the ability to function as a responsible and productive member of a team.

Assignment:

Further develop these criteria through a workteam potentially with the assistance of the facilitator.

4. Development of questions for the Science Advisors

The Planning Agreement identifies several questions for Science Advisors to address at a minimum

- Recommend scientifically sound conservation strategies for species and natural communities proposed to be covered by the BDCP;
- Recommend a range of conservation actions that would address the needs of species, ecosystems, and ecological processes in the Planning Area proposed to be addressed by the BDCP;
- Recommend management principles and conservation goals that can be used in developing a framework for the monitoring and adaptive management component of the BDCP; and
- Identify data gaps and uncertainties so that risk factors can be evaluated.

Assignment:

The facilitator can work with a workteam to develop greater specificity on these questions to ensure that the science advisors provide information that is useful to the Parties. An expanded list of questions can then be brought back to the Steering Committee.

5. Coordination with CALFED Science Program and Delta Vision

The Planning Agreement calls for coordination with the CALFED Science Program and the Independent Science Board to identify science advisors. Once the criteria are finalized, they can be forwarded to the Science Program along with a request for suggested names. In recognition of the need for coordination with the Delta Vision, it is suggested that the request for names of advisors be made jointly with the Delta Vision and that every attempt be made to develop some degree of overlap with advisors for both processes.

Assignment:

Develop joint letter with Delta Vision to Science Program requesting recommended names of science advisors

6. Approve Science Advisors and Questions

Once a final list of advisors and questions are ready, they can be brought back to the Steering Committee for approval.